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ABSTRACT

A study examined: (1) whether a relationship exists between self-concept relating to reading and reading performance of school children in grades three and four; and (2) whether it is possible to identify the four types of self-concept proposed by M. Levesque and derived from Staats Paradigmatic Behaviorism (positive-realistic, positive-unrealistic, negative-realistic, and negative-unrealistic). Subjects, 109 students from four classes, were divided into four groups according to their reading performance: high, mid-high, mid-low, and low achievers. Each student answered five questions evaluaing his or her self-concept relating to reading. The results indicated a significant difference among the four groups of students with respect to their self-concept relating to reading. Results also indicated that 49% of the children had a positive-realistic self-concept, 33% had a positive-unrealistic self-concept, 12% had a negative-realistic self-concept, and 4% had a negative-unrealistic self-concept. (Three tables of data are included and seven references are attached.) (Author/ARH)

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Relationship between achievement in Reading and self-concept relating to reading

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Abstact

This research had two objectives: (1) To verify the existence of a relationship between self-concept relating to reading and reading performance of school children in grades three and four; and (2) to divide the subjects according to the four self-concept categories proposed by Lévesque (1982) and derived from Staats Paradigmatic Behaviorism, i.e. positive-realistic, positive-unrealistic, negative-realistic, and negative-unrealistic. The 109 students in the four classes were divided into four groups according to their reading performance: high, mid-high, mid-low and low achievers. Each student answered five questions evaluating his self-concept relating to reading. The results indicated a significant difference between the four groups of students with respect to their self-concept relating to reading. They also indicated that 49% of the children have a positive-realistic self-concept, 33% have a positive-unrealistic self-concept, 14% have a negative-realistic self-concept and 4% have a negative-unrealistic self-concept.

Staats paradigmatic behaviorism regards self-concept as both an effect and a cause. This constitutes an attempt to reconcile personality theories and elemental behaviorism. Personality theories consider self-concept as an internal process determining the behavior of an individual. On the other hand, elemental behaviorists consider self-concept, if they recognize it, as an effect of the learning conditions provided by the environment.

Staats suggested that self-concept is a complex constellation of repertoires the individual has learned. He also suggested

> "that when the constellation has reached a certain level of complexity, composed of repertoires that have been permanently learned and then provide continuity, such constellations of behavior tend to be labelled as aspects of personality" (Staats, 1975).

Self-concept would be a constellation of such repertoires learned in a hierarchical-commulative way as effect that would later determine one's behavior and also the behavior of others toward that person as causal. The self-concept constellation would be composed of repertoires such as mental images, emotions, attitudes, values, social and self-labelling, and so on and so forth.

An individual self-concept could be positive or negative depending on whether the person describes himself in positive or negative terms. Also her self-concept could be realistic or unrealistic depending on whether or not the description that the person makes of her behavior matches the description made by others. Lévesque (1982) persuing Staats work on self-concept presented 4 types of self-concepts coming from the combination of these characteristics. Self-concept could be positive-realistic, positive-unrealistic, negative-realistic and negative-unrealistic.

Self-concept is complex because the general self-concept component of an individual's pesonality will include many specific self-concepts. For instance, a child could have a self-concept relating to his academic performance at school and another relating to his social performance. The academic self-concept could differ significantly from the social self-concept depending on the description that the child makes of his performance in these two areas.

The present research was mainly interested in the academic self-concept and more precisely with the academic self-concept relating to the area of reading. This research had two objectives, the first was to verify the existence of a relationship between academic self-concept relating to reading and academic achievement in reading. The second objective was to verify the existence of the four types of self-concept described earlier.

Methodoly

Subjects

Four classrooms of an elementary school were used in this study. There were 2 third grade classes and 2 fourth grade classes. The total sample size was N=109 (64 males and 45 females). The students were divided into four groups according to their reading grades: low, mid-low, mid-high, and high achievers. Since evaluation criteria for reading could vary from one teacher to another, the subjects of each classroom were divided into the four reading categories and then we grouped them again into to the final grouping.

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table 1

Instrument

For the measurement of the self-concept relating to reading, we used a simplified version of the French translation of the Self-Concept of Academic Ability Scale (Brookeover, Paterson and Thomas, 1962). The translation was made by Lévesque (1982). This scale was composed of five items asking the child to evaluate his ability to read. The evaluation of each item was made on a 5 points continuum ranging from very weak (1 point) to excellent (5 points). The alpha cofficient of validity for that scale had been previously computed at 0.81.

Results

Relationship between self-concept specific to reading and academic achievement in reading.

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table 2

Table 2 presents the mean scores obtained by the groups of readers both for each item and the whole questionnaire. Analysis of variance revealed that low achievers (19.04) in reading had a significantly lower self-concept than both the mid-high (20.82) and high achievers (22.14) and that high achievers (22.14) in reading had a significantly higher self-concept than both the low (19.04) and mid-low (19.65) achievers ($F(3,105)$: 8.65, p. <.001). Also

there was a significant difference between at least two groups, usually between low and high achievers for items 1, 2 3 and 4. Item 5 showed no significant difference between the four groups (F (3,105): 1.67, ns). Itemf 5 was the only item that did not ask the child to compare his performance in reading with that of the other children . Instead, it asked him to evaluate his own learning potential. Results also indicated a low correlation(.36) between academic self-concept relating to reading and performance in reading.

Types of self-concept

The distribution of our subjects among the four types of self-concept was obtained by combining the subject grade in reading to the score he has obtained on the self-concept questionnaire. A score of 17 and below was considered to index a low self-concept where as a score of 18 and above was assumed to reflect a positive self-concept. This cut-off point was established by Lévesque (1982). The self-concept was said to be realistic or unrealistic depending upon the child's performance in reading as compared to the rating on the self-concept questionnaire.

Results indicated that 49% of the children had a positive-realistic self-concept, 33% had a positive-unrealistic self-concept, 14% had a negative-realistic self-concept and 4% had a negative-unrealistic self-concept.

These results indicate that it is possible to identify among a school population the four types of self-concept; the positive-realistic being the most frequent and the negative-unrealistic being the least frequent. Moreover, they suggest that 82% of the subjects have a positive self-concept and that 63% have a realistic self-concept.

These results show that there may be a dichotomy between a child's perception of his performance in reading and the grades that he receives in class. This would be the case for 37% of the subjects. According to Serafica and Harway (1979), some children, and especially those with learning disabilities are unaware of, misinterpret or ignore the attitudes of others towards them. They tend to have difficulty with expressive and receptive communication and also with identifying and comprehending such social cues as facial expressions, tone of voice, and body postures. Finally, they have a low ability to make inferences about the feelings of others and their own social status. These are all cognitive abilities that allow the child to evaluate his behavior and to compare it with those of others. Nevertheless, a majority of students (63%) seem to evaluate their performance correctly .

This section of the research should be considered as a first validation of the four types of self-concept derived from Staats' paradigmatic behaviorism. More need to be done on this topic. One suggestion would be to replicate this research with more subjects

The causal aspect of self-concept described by Staats (1975) should also be investigated for each of the four types of self-concept: What will be the influence of each type of self-concept on one's behavior and on the behavior of others toward that person. For example, Burndett and Jensen (1983) found that children with negative self-concept tend to be more aggressive than children with positive self-concept. However, these results did not take into account the realistic-unrealistic componant of self-concept.

Researchers should elaborate on and refine measurement instruments allowing us to determine the type of self-concept that a child has with precision. These findings should allow us to develop and validate intervention procedure that would best meet child's needs for each type of self-concept.

Finally, a last suggestion would be to evaluate the effect of mainstreaming on self-concept. the very limited research on the subject seems to indicate that mainstreamed children would have a better self-concept than children placed in special classes .

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Table 1

Distribution of subjects among the four groups of readers

	groups of readers				
	low	mid-low	mid-high	high	total
3rd grade A	6	6	6	7	25
3rd grade B	7	5	7	7	26
4th grade A	6	7	7	9	29
4th grade B	7	8	8	6	29
total	26	26	28	29	109
males	19	14	18	13	64
females	7	12	10	16	45

Table 2

Mean scores obtained by the groups of readers for each item and the whole questionnaire.

Items	Groups of readers			
	low	mid-low	mid-high	high
1-comparison with friends	3.46	3.73	3.96	4.28
2-comparison with class mates	3.46	3.48	3.82	3.93
3-standing at the end of studies	3.92	3.88	4.18	4.41
4- work evaluation	3.85	4.15	4.29	4.72
5-grades able to obtain	4.35	4.50	4.57	4.79
total	19.04	19.65	20.82	22.14

Table 3

Distribution of subjects among the four types of self-concept

Types of self-concept	Percentage of subjects associated with that type
Positive-realistic	49
Postive-unrealistic	33
Negative-realistic	14
Negative-unrealistic	4